

REMARKS

Initially, please note that the spelling of --therebetween-- has been corrected in each of claims 20, 22 and 25.

In the rejection mailed March 24, 2006: claims 5, 6, 16 and 17 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Iwamoto et al.; claims 7, 8, 10, 12-14, 18, 19, 21, 23 and 24 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Iwamoto et al. in view of Cox et al.; and claims 9, 11, 15, 20, 22 and 25 were objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but were indicated to be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

In order to discuss the rejections issued by the Examiner, a telephonic interview was conducted with Examiner Matthews on April 25, 2006. During this interview, Applicants' undersigned representative explained why claims 5 and 16 are not anticipated by Iwamoto et al. Specifically, Applicants' undersigned representative explained that projection 18 of Iwamoto et al. is not a stopper member since it serves no stopping function. Additionally, Applicants' undersigned representative explained that endless belt 20 forms part of a separating conveyor, and therefore cannot form part of a stopper since the separating conveyor and stoppers are claimed as being separate and distinct members. Thus, the "second stopper" and "first stopper member" as recited in claims 5 and 16 cannot be read on endless belt 20 and projection 18 of Iwamoto et al.

Examiner Matthews was in agreement and stated that, upon the filing of a Response, the 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) rejection of claims 5 and 16 would not be maintained.

Cox et al. does not resolve these deficiencies of Iwamoto et al., and accordingly, claims 5-25 are allowable over Iwamoto et al. and Cox et al. either taken alone or in combination.

In view of the above remarks, it is respectfully submitted that the present application is in condition for allowance and an early Notice of Allowance is earnestly solicited.

If after reviewing this Amendment, the Examiner believes that any issues remain which must be resolved before the application can be passed to issue, the Examiner is invited to contact the Applicants' undersigned representative by telephone to resolve such issues.

Respectfully submitted,

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